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Anti-treaty campaign aimed at bolstering military Will SALT spur weapons build-up?

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For a treaty supposedly aimed at setting limits on nuclear weapons, the proposed SALT 2 agreement may well be the vehicle for ushering in a massive U.S. military build-up and a restoration of governmental powers momentarily curbed by Watergate and the U.S. military debacle in Vietnam.

It's not simply that the ceilings mandated by the accord are considerably above what both the U.S. and the Soviet Union are likely to develop in the way of additional nuclear weapons anyway; or that more than ample provision is made for the deployment of new weaponry—the cruise missile, for instance—which will have to be matched on the other side.

More to the point is the fact that with each passing day it is becoming increasingly clear that the concerted anti-SALT campaign is not primarily aimed at defeating the treaty outright. Its real objective is to extract a commitment from the Carter administration for greater military expenditures in areas not covered by the treaty and to strengthen the role of both the Pentagon and the CIA.

All signs point to the conclusion that the President is not an unwilling partner in this elaborate charade.

Carter, with a keen eye on next year's presidential election, is trying to have it both ways. His 1976 campaign pledge to reduce military expenditures has already gone by the boards and he has instituted an after-inflation 3% boost in military spending. He is clearly prepared for more. At the same time, Carter is aware of general public support for an arms-control agreement and would like to cast himself in the "peace-maker" image.

The strategy is simple. He will grant "concessions" to opponents of SALT in order to get the treaty ratified. Liberals will be called upon to support these concessions in order to get the pact.

An enlightening indicator of this process was offered by Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee and widely touted as a "moderate" whose support for SALT is deemed crucial to its ultimate ratification. In a speech to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce April 30, Nunn outlined the conditions under

which he might be induced to vote for the treaty. They add up to a program of additional militarization that even the Joint Chiefs of Staff would consider a banquet.

Among Nunn's proposals: more strategic bombers and submarine-launched ballistic missiles; a new program to protect land-based missiles from attack; modernization of nuclear forces in Europe; deployment of the neutron bomb, ground-launched cruise missiles and additional medium-range ballistic missiles in Europe; building up conventional forces in both Europe and the Pacific; increased appropriations for the Navy; revitalization of U.S. "intelligence capability;" revival of the draft.

Nunn made no bones about his aims. He wants Carter to prepare the U.S. people "to make sacrifices to counter the growing Soviet military threat." In his view, "the present military balance and trends within it" are not "an acceptable foundation for our nation's future security."

Nunn is not a lone voice. He is speaking on behalf of clients—the Pentagon and the CIA—who are determined to use the SALT debate to build up their power. Thus the Joint Chiefs of Staff, whose support for the pact is deemed essential to its passage, have coyly let it be known that they have so far "reserved" judgment on the merits of the treaty.

"There are still some issues to be resolved," declared Gen. David C. Jones, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, in a speech in Oklahoma April 28. The "issues to be resolved" are the extent of Carter's commitment to the type of program offered by Sen. Nunn.

EASING RESTRICTION ON CIA

Similarly, Adm. Stansfield Turner, head of the CIA, has publicly raised doubts about the ability of the U.S. to verify Soviet compliance with a new SALT agreement. Turner claimed recently that the loss of key listening posts in Iran had raised doubts about the matter. The comments irked White House officials since, in their view, the fix with Turner was already in on April 20 when the administration proposed new legislation easing current restrictions on CIA covert actions abroad.

One indication of Carter's seriousness—and an ironic comment on the role assigned liberals who take on the responsibilities of executive office—is the fact that Vice-President Walter Mondale is a principal proponent of the new legislation. During his Senate tenure, Mondale was a foremost advocate of more stringent controls over the CIA's covert activities.

But Turner, it would appear, is holding out for more. Having cast doubt on SALT's verifiability, the CIA head now can offer Carter a big plus by way of support for the pact provided he gets concrete assurances that his concerns are met. Clearly one way to enhance the verification process would be additional funds and powers for the intelligence agency.

And while Nunn was calling for "an alternative to the all-volunteer force," a House of Representatives subcommittee last week approved a bill requiring registration of all 18-year-olds beginning Dec. 31, 1980. The measure, which has been endorsed by Defense Secretary Harold Brown and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is seen as preparing the way for reinstitution of compulsory military service.

Nunn himself explained why, questioning U.S. imperialism's military capacity "when the lowest economic groups are vastly over-represented in the combat arms and middle and upper-class America are increasingly exempt." Beyond the populist rhetoric of these remarks rests the widespread concern in the military establishment that the "all-volunteer" army is weighted too heavily with Blacks, other minorities and working class youths making it, in light of the Vietnam war and possible future combat assignments in Africa, unreliable.

At the same time Carter escalated his SALT-selling campaign by engineering an unprecedented swap of two Soviet diplomats convicted on spy charges for the release of five Soviet "dissidents." The trade, consummated April 27, brought Aleksandr Ginzburg, a leader of the "human rights" campaign in the Soviet Union, and four others to the U.S. Among those released were two men jailed for plotting the hijacking of a Soviet plane to Israel.

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It seemed fairly obvious that Moscow agreed to the deal at this time in an effort to defuse the "human rights" propaganda campaign which has been used as an argument against SALT and also as an impediment to new trade agreements between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Trade—not only with the Soviet Union, but perhaps even more importantly, with China—was also a major factor in Carter's interest in the swap.

A crucial condition for the extensive trade agreements Beijing (Peking) wants to negotiate with U.S. companies is the granting of "most-favored-nation" status to the People's Republic, thus eliminating restrictive tariffs on the proposed deals. But Carter does not want to give such status to China without applying it at the same time to the Soviet Union—for both economic and political reasons. However, 1974 legislation sponsored by Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.) ties such status to a country's "emigration" policies.

With the "spies-for-dissidents" exchange and signs of some liberalization in Soviet policy concerning emigration of Jews and others, Carter may be able to meet the legal requirements that would make it possible to grant both the Soviet Union and China the new status, thus facilitating a number of large-scale pending trade deals.

Meanwhile, Carter stepped up the drive for SALT ratification with a major speech to the American Newspaper Publishers Assn. in New York April 25. This talk emphasized three points: U.S.-Soviet military parity, the U.S. military build-up plans independent of SALT, and verification.

A few days later at an April 30 news conference, Carter repeated his statement on verification but combined it with an ominous threat designed not only to strengthen his hand with the hard-liners but also to serve as a message to Moscow.

"The Soviets know," he said, "that if we ever detect any violation of the SALT agreement, that that would be a basis on which to reject the treaty in its entirety. There would be a possible termination of the good relationship between our country and the Soviet Union on which detente is based, and it might very well escalate into a nuclear confrontation."

It would, perhaps, have been too much to expect the President to note what the Soviet Union might do if it detected any U.S. violations of the agreement.